residents. The permanent housing complex is located farther from US-191 and consists of three permanent residences for park employees and families. Sources of man-made background noise near the Moab site may include automobile traffic on US-191, trains on the Union Pacific Railroad, aircraft flying overhead, and outdoor recreational activities in adjacent areas.

The city of Moab is located about 3 miles southeast of the Moab site and is outside the influence of noise originating at the site. Expected noise levels in and around the city of Moab likely range from 45 to 55 dBA, with levels approaching 65 dBA around busy roads. The city of Moab has a noise ordinance specifying that noise levels not exceed 65 dBA (Moab City Ordinance 17.74.080, "Noise Levels"). This applies to residential zones from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday and not before 9:00 a.m. on Sunday. For commercial zones, the standard applies to the time interval between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. the following day. The acoustic environment in open desert in Utah is typical of other desert environments where average L_{dn} values range from 22 dB on calm days to 38 dB on windy days (Brattstrom and Bondello 1983).

Ground vibration is generally not perceived as a characteristic of the environment because background ground vibration is not perceptible to humans. Ground vibration is expressed as the average vibration root mean square (rms) velocity in decibels (expressed as dBV) with a reference to 10^{-6} inch per second. The highest mean value of rms velocity over a given event is called the maximum rms velocity. It is a more suitable expression of ground vibration energy for addressing human annoyance because of the response time for humans to respond to ground vibration stimuli. The human threshold for the perception of ground vibration is 62 to 65 dBV. A large truck or bus can produce ground vibration levels of about 62 dBV. About 70 dBV will result in notable human response.

Natural sources of ground vibration include wave action, strong winds striking natural or man-made structures, and, infrequently, seismic activity. Human activities that can create perceptible levels of ground vibration (such as blasting, pile driving, operation of heavy earth-moving equipment, or rail traffic) are important when sensitive sites, structures, or activities may be affected. The most significant background component of ground vibration in the Moab area is railroad traffic.

No background noise or ground vibration data are available for the Moab site. A single residence is located to the northeast of the site; otherwise, there are no residences located close to the site.

3.1.15 Visual Resources

Visual resources are the visible physical features of a landscape that impart scenic value. Southeastern Utah is known worldwide for its unique scenic qualities and unusual landscape features. It is a land of deep canyons, rock arches, towering rock formations, badlands, and expansive panoramas. Many of the more spectacular features are preserved in national and state parks or monuments, three of which—Arches and Canyonlands National Parks and Deadhorse Point State Park—are located near Moab, and one of which—Natural Bridges National Monument—is located west of Blanding.

BLM has developed a Visual Resource Management system that helps federal agencies classify and manage landscapes and their associated scenic values. The system allows landscapes to be ranked and placed into one of four classes. Each class has a management objective that is related to the value placed on the scenic characteristics of the landscape (BLM 2003b).

Class I Objective: Preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

Class II Objective: Retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture of the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Class III Objective: Partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements of the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Class IV Objective: Provide for management activities that require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repetition of basic elements.

BLM classifies the area surrounding the Moab site as Class II, primarily because of the nearness of the Colorado River, Arches National Park, and stunning landform features in the area (BLM 2003b).

The Moab site is on the floodplain of the Colorado River and is immediately adjacent to US-191 and Potash Road SR-279. Depending on the viewing location, the backdrop to the site may be the steep, red sandstone cliffs that define the western edge of Moab valley; The Portal, where the Colorado River re-enters its steep, narrow canyon; or the towering and often snow-covered La Sal Mountains. In any direction, the contrasts in the green-patchwork valley floor and vertical red cliffs impart a spectacular quality to the views.

The Moab site tailings pile can be viewed by northbound and southbound travelers on US-191 and Potash Road and by tourists from two unmarked scenic turnouts on the Arches National Park road. The tailings pile is a relatively large, flat, geometrically shaped landform that has smooth steep side slopes on the south and east sides and terraced, step-like side slopes on the north and west sides. The predominant horizontal lines created by the pile provide a moderate contrast to the adjacent vertical sandstone cliffs; however, the red color of the soils currently covering the tailings blends with the reds of the surrounding cliffs, allowing the pile to go unnoticed by many first-time visitors to the area. Because of its size, the tailings pile moderately to strongly dominates the view from most of the viewing locations. It can be seen from one residence located directly northeast of the site and a residence at The Portal RV and Park across the river from the site. Figure 3–20 shows the current view of the tailings pile from southbound US-191.